Martha's Easter Bonnet.

Annie Hamilton Donnell.

HORATIO.

Mrs. Whitney waited a reasonable period, then spoke again, a degree louder.

"Horatio!"

"Why! why, yes, Martha, did you speak?"

"I did. I believe you're getting hard of hearing, Horatio. I suppose it's nothing but what we can expect. Your father was deaf, and your grandfather before him."

"Oh, but, Martha, they were old. I'm not old." Horatio Whitney's care-worn face was eager and wistful. It seemed to be struggling to put on its rightful mask of youth—a man at 45 is not old—but to be painfully conscious that it no longer fitted. Almost at once it settled back to its lines of care. With a sigh Horatio Whitney gave up his youth.

"Maybe I am old," he said, quietly.

"Well, I'm not!" laughed his wife. "When I'm old, I won't ask you for my Easter money. I suppose you know Sunday after next is Easter, Horatio?"

"Easter—Sunday after next? Are you sure, Martha?" He sighed again unconsciously. There was so little "Easter money" for Martha this year. Horatio Whitney had been married 15 years; there had been 15 Easters. There had always been "Easter money."

"I went down town prospecting to-day. If I'd had the money, I should have taken up a claim—in Easter fixings," she laughed pleasantly. Her

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own face was uncreased and comely. Horatio looked at it round the edge of his newspaper and experienced his old feeling of pride in Martha. He was thinking that Martha was young enough. Martha was 45, too.

"How much will you need, dear?" The "dear" went with the little thrill of admiration.

"Mercy, Horatio, as if you didn't know how much it always takes! Easter bonnets don't vary much from one year to another. The market is always 'firm!' You've always given me $20; that includes gloves and what-nots, of course."

"Would—er—fifteen do, do you think?" hesitatingly. The difference between $20 and $15 took on preposterous value to-night. Horatio Whitney was a little more tired than usual. The care lines were deeper in his plain face.

Mrs. Whitney dropped her work into her lap and peered round the drop-lamp at her husband. Horatio might be growing old and deaf, but she did not like to think he was growing stingy. Fifteen?—why, she had always had to stretch the $20!

"You need not give me any, Horatio," she said, stiffly. "I'll stay at home Easter Sunday and look through the slats at other people's Easter bonnets. If you imagine I am going up the broad aisle of Canaan church in my last year's bonnet, you are laboring under a delusion. It would be bad enough if our pew was behind, but when it's the third from the front—!" She gathered up her sewing and set swift, perturbed stitches in the soft white stuff. Horatio was conscious that she looked even prettier with that red tinge in her cheeks. On the instant he put aside anxious thoughts of unpaid bills and bills to come. Martha must have her "Easter money." He took it out of his worn old pocket-book, and moistened his finger-tip to count it and make sure it was all there.

"Sixteen — two's eighteen — two's twenty, dear. I'm sorry the bills ain't all clean—I know you like 'em better that way—"

"Don't worry about their being clean!" she laughed. The stiffness was all gone from her voice. "I guess Mme. Jacque will be willing to take them in exchange for a bonnet. Oh, Horatio, you must see that little beauty in the window! It's the one I mean to get—the one on the left of the window, as you look in from the outside. It has apple-blossom buds on it—you know you always liked apple-blossom buds, Horatio!" She nodded across to him archly and her full face reminded him of the Martha's of 15 years ago. He conjured up that other beautiful little bonnet with apple-blossom buds in it, and set it on her smooth brown hair—Martha had not grown gray at all.

"That one was beautiful," he smiled.

"Well, this one is. I shouldn't wonder if it made me look 15 years younger!" she laughed. "But I don't want to decide on it till you see it. You always did have excellent taste in bonnets, dear." She fell into the "dear" naturally enough, as if the soft halo of 15 years ago were over her, too. She had always called him "dear," then—how many years was it she had called him Horatio?

"I wish you'd go to the office through Jermyn street to-morrow morning—no, I'll go with you. That will be better. You can pass judgment on the little gem-bonnet, and I shall go in and buy it!—for I'm certain you'll like it."

They had not walked through the streets together for a good while—not even to church. Horatio Whitney was keenly sensitive to the fact that his overcoat and hat were shabby. He did not care to remember how long it was since he had bought new ones, and he did not want Martha to remember. So he stayed at home quietly, and grew a little grayer and a little older every day.

"Martha's handsome and young, still," he reasoned; "I want her to keep so. It doesn't matter now about me; it's too late in the day to save me. Martha's going to have pretty bonnets and things just as long as I can scrape together the money. And what's more, she isn't going to be mortified to death by having a stoop-shouldered, wrinkled old man, in a faded overcoat, going up the broad aisle beside her. I'm tired; I'll stay at home and rest."

So he had stayed at home Sunday after Sunday. He was always tired; it was a good enough excuse. Martha gave up urging him after awhile.

The next morning Martha walked down-town with Horatio, through Jermyn street. It was a beautiful day. Belated spring had come at last, and the birds were celebrating the event joyously. The lawns were taking on green tinges, and the electricity of growing things and buoyant spirits was in the air. Martha tingled with it as she walked along.

"You walk so slow, Horatio," she complained. "Why don't you step up brisk and smart? Anybody'd think you were an old man!"

"Well, I guess they'd hit it, Martha!" he smiled. "Time was when I'd have skipped on this kind of a morning."

"Well, I'd skip now, if I was sure nobody was looking! Here we are at Jermyn street."

They turned into the busy thoroughfare and settled into the current of busy men and women. All the world was in a hurry, but all the world was cheerful. The electricity in the crisp, clean air was manifest on every side, in alert gait and smiling face. Everyone was quaffing the sweet spring tonic. Even Horatio Whitney drank in unconscious whiffs of it and picked himself up, rejuvenated, and swung along with the rest.

Down the street a little way progress was temporarily blocked, and Horatio and Martha came to a standstill. A heavy dray was being backed across the sidewalk.

"We can go out round," Horatio said. "It's a nuisance the way these fellows take possession of the highway. It ought to be stopped. Come on—this way."

"No, I'm going to wait. He'll get unloaded in a minute. I don't fancy being mixed up with a lot of electric cars and grocery carts and folks. There's no hurry, Horatio."

They were abreast of a splendid plate-glass show-window, and Martha turned to it for entertainment. What woman was ever at loss for amusement with a show-window at her elbow? But this one—Martha turned away a little disgusted. It was only a men's furnishing store.

The drayman took his time. Martha was driven back to the window in self-defense, and it was this time that she saw the coat that reminded her. A little thrill ran over her, for it was the exact shade—the soft, deep gray—of that other coat. It was not distinguishably different, either, in style—queer that 15 years should make so little change!

Martha glanced at Horatio's shabby overcoat. The pitiless sun gave it no quarter. She saw all its fadedness and meanness, and the listless, dejected sag of it. It gave her a start of surprise that she had not noticed it before. She scarcely ever noticed Horatio's clothes. They were always whole—Horatio had always been "easy" on his things. There was rarely anything to mend.

But now—the contrast between the spruce, new coats in the window and Horatio's coat! Between the sleek hats set jauntily on the staring painted heads of the window-dummies and the faded, worn one planted squarely on Horatio's gray hair! Martha's heart misgave her at the contrast. She did not want to look, but looked on steadily.

Horatio was looking at the drayman. His bent shabby shoulders were "back to" the great window. Horatio never looked in show windows.

"When you get through looking at the styles, my dear, we'll go on. That's fellow's taken his time, but he's out o' the way now."

It was Horatio's voice in her ear and Martha started with an odd sense of confusion and guilt. She went on down the street trying to joke herself at ease again, but her thoughts ran on persistently in a perturbed undercurrent. The gray overcoat that had reminded her—she could not get it out of her sight. Gray had been so becoming to Horatio 15 years ago—Martha had chosen that color herself for his "wedding overcoat." And she had had apple-buds in her wedding bonnet because pink and gray were so beautiful together.

Martha roused herself at madame's. "There," she cried, "that little beauty on the extreme left—don't tell me you don't like it!" She was laughing a trifle breathlessly. Her eyes were on his face.

"Isn't it a little gem, Horatio?"

"Yes, oh, yes, Martha, I like it," he said, warmly. "You go right in and buy it. Don't you wait, or some-

". . . and whirled him around to the mirror."

body else will get in ahead. The posies on it are beautiful. Martha, it reminds me!"

"I thought it would!" she laughed, softly, with the tremor still running through her voice. "It's very much like that other one, dear."

After a little he went on alone, down the street.

Martha stood watching him. "Horatio's all stooped over. He works too hard. I never knew he was getting so stoopy. He used to be straight enough." She glanced in at the Easter bonnet, as if it reminded her of the time when Horatio had been straight.

Easter Sunday dawned clear and perfect. Martha woke to the trill of Easter carols outside her window. A myriad of little birds seemed vying with each other to celebrate His rising. The jubilant chorus filled all the air.

"I'm thankful it's pleasant," thought Martha. "I want it to be pleasant to-day." She went about her morning duties with a light heart. At breakfast she chattered like a girl.

"Horatio, you're going to church with me to-day—I thought you might like to know!"

"No, no, Martha," he said, hastily; "I guess I won't go to-day—not to-day."

"I said you were going!" she laughed. "Didn't you promise to 'love, honor and obey' 15 years ago? I'm through marching off to church alone every Sunday morning."

"But I'm tired, Martha. I'm going to stay at home and get rested up for to-morrow."

"You were tired last Sunday, and the Sunday before, and the Sunday before that."

"Yes, I know—I guess I'm always tired, Martha."

"Then you must go to church and rest. Horatio Whitney, do you know how long ago it was that you went to church with me?"

"No, I don't. Don't reckon, Martha."

"Well, I won't if you'll turn over a new leaf to-day. I've set my heart on your going to meeting with me, dear."

He flushed painfully. Martha was making it very hard. If she hadn't said "dear!"

"But I—I can't, Martha. I'd like to if I could."

"Say: 'But I can, dear'—say it, Horatio!" She was round on his side of the table, with her hand on his arm. "Come upstairs and get ready. We don't want to be late on Easter. I've got your things all out on the bed."

"I—I haven't any things, Martha. You mustn't ask me—I can't go."

"Well, I've got my things all out on the bed, then. I want you to come up and see my things, dear. Come!"

He could not resist her. She was like the old girl Martha—persistent and irresistible. He yielded weakly and followed her up the stairs. The Easter things were spread out on the bed. Horatio Whitney uttered a queer sound at the sight of them.

"Martha!"

"Well, don't you like them? Don't you like my Easter bonnet, dear? I like it better than any I ever had before, all the Easters of my life. Now I will try it on and let you see how becoming it is."

She set the soft gray felt hat on his head and whirled him round to the mirror. Then she threw the handsome gray overcoat across his shoulders and laid the gloves against his sleeve.

"See how they match!" she cried. "And they all match you. You great stupid boy, to stand there as if you didn't recognize yourself!"

"I don't," he gasped. Suddenly he faced about. "But, Martha—"

"Say 'dear.'"

"But, dear, I don't understand. You were going to get the one with apple-blossom buds on it—"

"What do you call that?" She had caught up a little thing in lace and flowers from the table, and was whirling it round on her fingers before his astonished eyes. "Aren't those apple-blossom buds? Can't you smell 'em? You ought to, for they're the very ones you declared you could smell 15 years ago! The very ones, Horatio! I got out the little old bonnet, and there were the flowers as fresh as ever—not withered at all! Snip, snip—I had cut them off and there they were on my Easter bonnet! Now, we'll go to church, dear."

He walked along the sunny street beside her as if in a pleasant dream. Unconsciously, he held himself straight and walked briskly.

"You go so fast I can't keep up with you!" laughed Martha in his ear. "Do you think I'm a girl?"

"Yes, and I'm a boy!" He was laughing, too. He had not felt so rested and young before for a long time. He was proud of Martha—and proud of himself. He was glad when they passed acquaintances and friends.

They seemed to get ahead of everybody. Once Martha gave him a little push.

"Go on ahead a little way," she whispered, "there's no one now to notice, and I want to look at you as a whole!"

When she caught up with him, she squeezed his arm gently. "You look handsome, Horatio Whitney—don't tell me you don't! Now tell me I look handsome."

"Martha, Martha—dear—you look good enough to eat!" It was a homely compliment, but it suited Martha. They went on together through the sweet Easter sunshine. At the church door she stopped him.

"Wait! We're going to walk up the broad aisle slowly, Horatio—don't you go to hurrying. I want the people to have plenty of time to see my new Easter things! Now, ready!"

The altar was heaped with Easter lilies, and their sweet breath filled the church. Martha drew in long whiffs of it.

"How good they smell, dear," she whispered. "Is there anything sweeter than Easter lilies?"

He smiled down at her. Martha was short and plump, and he was tall to-day.

"I don't smell any Easter lilies," he said; "I don't smell anything but apple blossoms."—Country Gentleman.

SUN ENTERS OLD DUNGEON.

The Place Where Ethan Allen Was Incarcerated Is Exposed to the Light.

The sun shone the other day for the first time in 147 years into the dungeon where Ethan Allen was incarcerated at New York. In order to expose the dungeon, where of recent years the bookbinder and his assistants have spent their time preserving the invaluable records of the registrar's office, the laborers found it necessary to pry away a big block of the marble flooring directly under the iron ring in the ceiling above and from which, according to tradition, many a good American swung to death in the periods immediately subsequent to the declaration of independence.

THE IMPRESSIONS OF A WOMAN

What a Woman Says About Western Canada.

Although many men have written to this paper regarding the prospects of Western Canada, and its great possibilities, it may not be uninteresting to give the experience of a woman settler, written to Mr. M. V. McInnes, the agent of the Government at Detroit, Mich. If the reader wishes to get further information regarding Western Canada it may be obtained by writing any of the agents of the Government whose name is attached to the advertisement appearing elsewhere in this paper.

The following is the letter referred to:

Hilldown, Alberta, Feb'y. 5, 1903.

Dear Sir:

I have been here now nearly five years, and thought I would write you a woman's impression of Western Canada—in Alberta. There are several ranchers in this district who, in addition to taking care of their cattle, carry on farming as well. Their herds of cattle number from 100 to 200 or 300 heads, and live out all winter without any shelter than the poplar bluffs and they come in in the spring in good order. Most of the ranchers feed their cattle part of the time, about this time of the year, but I have seen the finest fat cattle I ever saw that never got a peck of grain—only fattened on the grass. You see I have learned to talk farm since I came here—farming is the great business here. I know several in this district who never worked a day on the farm, till they came here, and have done well and are getting well off.

I think this will be the garden of the Northwest some day, and that day not very far distant. There has been a great change since we came here, and there will be a greater change in the next five years. The winters are all anyone could wish for. We have very little snow, and the climate is fine and healthy. Last summer was wet, but not to an extent to damage crops, which were a large average yield, and the hay was immense—and farmers wore a broad smile accordingly.

We have good schools, the Government pays 70 per cent. of the expense of education, which is a great boon in a new country. Of course, churches of different denominations follow the settlements. Summer picnics and winter concerts are all well attended, and as much, or more, enjoyed as in the East. Who would not prefer the pure air of this climate with its broad acres of fine farms, its rippling streams, its beautiful lakes, its millions of wild flowers, its groves of wild fruit of exquisite flavor, its streams and lakes teeming with fish and its prairies and bluffs with game, to the crowded and stiff state of society in the East. I would like to go home for a visit sometime, but not to go there to live, even if presented with the best farm in Michigan. Beautiful Alberta, I will never leave it. And my verdict is only a repetition of all who have settled in this country. This year, I believe, will add many thousands to our population. And if the young men, and old men also, knew how easy they could make a home free of all incumbrance in this country, thousands more would have settled here. I would sooner have 160 acres here than any farm where I came from in Michigan; but the people in the East are coming to a knowledge of this country, and as they do, they will come West in thousands. All winter, people have been arriving in Alberta, and I suppose in other parts as well, which is unusual, so we expect a great rush when the weather gets warmer.

We have no coal famine here; coal can be bought in the towns for $2 to $3, according to distance from the mines, and many haul their own coal from the mines—getting it there for 50 cents to a dollar a ton.

Very truly yours,

(Signed) Mrs. John McLachlan.

What Labor Unions Mean.

The rise of labor unions means first of all that the determination of wages for each laborer and his conditions of work ceases to be primarily his own affair; this in order that wages may be uniform, and that thus the merciless downward pressure of present-day competition may be checked. There are recorded nearly 5,000 strikes in the United States during twenty years, avowedly directed to this purpose of forcing the employer to deal collectively with the union. The responsibility for the fixing of wages shifts farther and farther from the individual workman, not only as the unions extend more widely over the nation, but also as the authority in one union and another becomes more and more centralized. The analogies between trade union history and the history of civil governments are numerous and striking; it is peculiarly noticeable that in most unions, as in the politics of this nation, the conflict for and against a strong central government has been waged fiercely, and that generally the centralizing party has prevailed.—Atlantic Monthly.